



GEORGE HUMPHRIES

## Enchanted Forest

*M*erchants Millpond State Park is a mystical place where ancient bald cypress trees and draping Spanish moss wrap around a 760-acre millpond nearly 200 years old. The floating leaves of water lilies meet knobby cypress knees at the surface of the still, black water. The pond's upper end contains a grove of 800-year-old bald cypresses and some of the



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state's largest water tupelos. More than 190 species of birds have been recorded, and waterfowl abound in winter. Water moccasins, or "cottonmouths," proliferate in the warm months. Other inhabitants include alligators, black bears, minks, gray foxes and river otters.

*A black bear wades through duckweed in a swamp (below); Edenton Bay and Albemarle Sound (below right)*

BILL LEA



The term is applied to both blueback herring and alewife, anadromous species that live as adults in the open ocean but swim back to the freshwater streams of their birth to breed. As recently as three decades ago, over 12 million herring were processed annually at Colerain. Early settlers ate their herring boiled, fried or corned (cured by salt). Many traded barrels of herring for sugar, rum and other goods. Though the population and commercial harvest of herring have drastically declined, it is still a spring tradition for locals to fry this fish-of-little-flesh to a crisp and eat it bones and all.

The Chowan River proper originates at the North Carolina-Virginia border where the Blackwater and Nottoway rivers meet. Narrow and lively at its source, the 50-mile-long Chowan flows southeast past such small towns as Winton and Colerain before broadening to nearly

2 miles wide where it meets the Albemarle Sound near Edenton. Along with the Roanoke River, it supplies most of the fresh water to the sound, which is part of the second-largest

KEN TAYLOR, WILDLIFE IMAGES

